DARK HORSE COMICS
40 YEARS

#1 of 4

THE WITCHER®

BLOOD STONE

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FREEDMAN

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BAK

ROMAN
TITOV

HASSAN
OTSMANE-ELHAOU

CD PROJEKT RED®

THE WITCHER®

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1 OF 4

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IT'D BE JUST OUR LUCK A ***WITCHER*** SHOWS UP ON HIS PASSAGE NORTH.

PLINTH'S A 'UMBLE 'OME. DON'T 'AVE NO ***MESSENGER*** STATION, SO NEWS O' THE WORLD REACHES US ***SLOW***-- ONLY EVER 'EAR IT FROM THESE MEN WHO COME LOOKIN' FOR TREASURE.

TREASURE?

AYE, LEGENDS 'ERE ABOUND... ***UNDISCOVERED TREASURES*** HIDDEN IN THE HILLS, THEY SAY. BUT NOT I, NOR ANYONE ELSE, 'AVE EVER LAID EYES ON NONE.

DON'T STOP THESE WOULD-BE TREASURE SEEKERS FROM VENTURIN' UP 'ERE. MOST OF 'EM 'AVE GAMBLING DEBTS. THEY 'EAR THE STORIES AND GET LURED FOR A QUICK FIX.

BUT TWIXT THE FROSTS AND THE PITS, THEY NEVER RETURN. NOT TO MENTION WHATEVER ***MONSTER*** BE DOIN' THIS...

HANDS LOOK RAW FROM DIGGING. NO OTHER MARKS ON HIM.
NO *MONSTER* DID THIS.
POISON DID.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
CAN *SMELL* IT.
JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT DID THIS, DOESN'T MEAN IT'S GOTTA BE A MONSTER.
HUMANS ARE PRETTY GOOD AT POISONING EACH OTHER TOO.
CAN'T IMAGINE ONE OF US WOULD BE CAPABLE O' SUCH A *COWARDLY* THING. WE'RE ALL GOOD FOLK 'ERE.
UNLESS IT WAS ANOTHER ONE O' THESE TREASURE 'UNTERS. BUT WE'VE 'AD DEATHS LIKE THIS SINCE AFORE I WAS A LAD.
BE SURPRISED WHAT EVIL *GOOD* FOLK CAN DO. BUT I DON'T HUNT PEOPLE.
O' COURSE... STILL, I'D BE MUCH OBLIGED IF YOU COULD TAKE A LOOK AFORE YOU CARRY ON. I TRULY BELIEVE WHATEVER'S DOIN' THIS AIN'T 'UMAN. ANY 'ELP WE CAN GET, WE'LL TAKE.

COULD SPARE *TWO DAYS.* ROACH NEEDS THE REST.

IF I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING THAT REQUIRES MY SERVICES, WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE ON.

EITHER WAY, YOU'LL PAY FOR MY TIME.

COURSE. I'LL EVEN OFFER YOU ROOM AND BOARD, AND A HOT BATH IF YOU FANCY. WE AIN'T GOT MUCH, BUT WE DO 'AVE A FINE BATHHOUSE.

WHAT MIGHT I *CALL* YOU, OTHER THAN A MONSTER 'UNTER?

GERALT. YOU?

THEY CALL ME *BAKER-SMITH.*

UNUSUAL NAME.

USED TO BE THE IRONSMITH BACK WHEN THE MINES NEEDED TOOLS. NOW I FIRE FRESH, CRACKLIN' LOAVES-- PROVIDE OUR COMMUNITY'S BREAD.

FOR GENERATIONS, ME FAMILY'S CALLED THESE HILLS 'OME, 'ELPED BUILD PLINTH FROM A MEAGER CAMP TO A BUSTLIN' TOWNSHIP. NOTHIN' I'M PROUDER OF THAN CARIN' FOR THESE FOLK.

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, BAKER-SMITH.

AYE. WAIT TILL YOU TASTE MY BREAD!

FEED HER WELL AND KEEP HER WARM. GOT A *LONG* RIDE AHEAD.

COURSE, SIR. WE TREAT ALL OUR ANIMALS RIGHTLY.

What about this *body?*

MOVE IT TO THE OLD STABLE. I'LL 'ELP YOU BURY IT LATER.

THAT'S *WOODCUTTER LEO.*

YOU'LL FIND *MANY* OF US ARE NAMED AFTER OUR TRADES.

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO EVERYONE, *eh?* WE'RE ALL ONE BIG FAMILY 'ERE. WE SHARE EVERYTHIN'-- OUR WINE, OUR MEAT, EVEN OUR *SECRETS.*

THE TWINS *NIEMIR* AND *NIERAD* RUN THE TAVERN AND INN WHERE YOU'LL BE SLEEPIN'.

"ME BOYS, *PETER* AND *ART.* AND ME LOVELY WIFE, *AVA.*

"AND THAT'S *BUDZIBOJ,* OUR BUTCHER.

"*KATRIN* BE LIKE A SECOND MOTHER TO EVERYONE AND RUNS THE BATHHOUSE.

"YOU CAN 'AVE YOUR GARBS WASHED THERE AND TAKE A STEAMING BATH IF YOU FANCY.

"THAT'S *STEWPO,* OUR RESIDENT DWARF. ONLY ONE BEEN 'ERE LONGER THAN ME. CRAVE A HOT MEAL, YOU'LL FIND NONE BETTER."

AND THAT'D BE OUR LITTLE 'UNTER, *ALEKSANDER*--ALWAYS TRYIN' TO COAX HIS *JULIA* AWAY FROM 'ER DUTIES. SHE'S BUDZIBOJ'S DAUGHTER AND THE SECOND-BEST CLEAVER IN TOWN.

LET THE GAL GET BACK TO WORK ALREADY AND COME 'ERE. WANT TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE.

PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, SIR. YOU'RE A ***WITCHER,*** AREN'T YOU?

THAT 'E IS. I WANT YOU TO SHOW GERALT THE LAY O' THE LAND. 'ELP 'IM FIND WHAT'S BEEN ***KILLIN'*** FOLK ALL THEM YEARS.

ONLY HALF A DAY'S LIGHT LEFT. SHOULD WE SET OFF NOW, OR WAIT TILL MORNING?

BEST WE GO ***NOW.*** DOUBT YOU EVEN ***HAVE*** A MONSTER FOR ME.

EVER ***SEEN*** ANYTHING THAT KILLS?

OUTSIDE OF WOLVES, WE SHOO OFF THE OCCASIONAL ***BEAR.*** BUT IN TRUTH, THE ***MOUNTAIN ITSELF*** BE THE DEADLIEST ADVERSARY WE FACE 'ERE.

TELL ME ABOUT THE *OLD MINES.*

HILLS BE *TEEMIN'* WITH 'EM. DWARVEN MINES FROM BEFORE PLINTH. THAT'S WHAT DRAWS ALL THEM *TREASURE SEEKERS.*

IF WE'RE TO FIND *ANYTHIN',* IT'LL BE IN THEM OL' *TUNNELS OF DEATH.*

NO MONSTERS, THOUGH?

NOT REALLY.

NOT UNLESS YOU COUNT "Lord Heavy Horn."

A *GHOST STORY* THEY TELL THE YOUNG'UNS TO KEEP 'EM FROM VENTURIN' UP THE MOUNTAIN ALONE. SAY IF IT FINDS YOU, *LOCKS EYES* WITH YOU, YOU'LL DIE *INSTANTLY.*

AYE, SAW IT ONCE MESELF, THOUGH *NO ONE BELIEVES ME.*

Lord Heavy Horn?

"FEW YEARS BACK, THIS WAS. I'M OUT COLLECTIN' SOME HARES, 'EAR SOMETHIN' IN THE DISTANCE.

"I ONLY LOOK FOR A ***MOMENT.*** IT WERE MUCH LARGER THAN A BEAR AND 'AD AN EVEN ***HUGER HEAD.***

"SOON AS I SEES IT, I TURN RIGHT AROUND AND ***RUN 'OME SCREAMIN' IN TERROR.***"

EVERYONE ***LAUGHED*** AT ME. SAID IT WAS JUST A ***MYTH.***

But I saw it. I ***know*** I did.

WERE ***SMART*** TO ***RUN.*** CURIOSITY AND BOLDNESS MAKE FOR GREAT ***STORIES,*** BUT IN REAL LIFE--

--THEY MOSTLY JUST GET YOU ***KILLED.***

MMMMM

WHAT IS IT?

MAGIC. NEARBY, SOME-WHERE.

NOT SEEING ANYTHING, THOUGH...

Hmm, COULD BE THE ***CAVERN*** WE'RE STANDIN' ON.

THERE'S DOZENS OF ENTRANCES, ALL LEADIN' DOWN TO A BIG MAZE WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN.

SHOW ME.

IT'S NEVER BEEN PROPERLY MAPPED, AND ANYONE WHO'S EVER GONE IN ***AIN'T COME BACK OUT.*** ME PARENTS INCLUDED.

FIRST, ME FATHER THOUGHT HE'D FIND US A FORTUNE. THEN ME MOTHER WENT IN AFTER 'IM.

ALL ANYONE FOUND WERE THIS RED SCARF O' HERS.

AS A RULE, WE ALL KEEP CLEAR O' CAVES AND MINES NOW.

Something's *not right...*

WAIT HERE.

I'M GOING IN.

GERALT, HOLD ON, I'M COMING WITH YOU!

HOW DEEP ARE WE GOIN'?

ALL THE WAY.

MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME MUM AND DAD.

ANOTHER FORK?

THIS WAY.

HOW DEEP DOES IT GO? BEEN WALKIN' FOREVER.

WATCH YOUR STEP.

THINK THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO 'EM? AS SIMPLE AS WALKIN' OFF A CLIFF?

NO WAY TO KNOW UNLESS YOU CLIMB DOWN THERE.

I THINK I SMELL...

=Snff=

WATER. UP AHEAD.

WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?

DON'T KNOW. NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.

MOTIFS ARE ***DWARVEN*** BUT ***STRANGER*** THAN ANYTHING I'VE SEEN IN MAHAKAM.

THIS PLACE IS ***VERY*** OLD. DOUBT ANYONE'S STEPPED FOOT HERE IN A ***LONG*** TIME.

SEE THEM STONES. HOW THEM'S SO ***PERFECTLY BALANCED*** LIKE THIS?

ALEKSANDER, BACK UP, ***SLOWLY...***

I-I WASN'T GOIN' TO TOUCH 'EM. I'D NEVER DESECRATE--

NOT THE STONES. LOOK THERE, AT THE ***SHORE***--

--HELLEBORE FLOWERS. SOME OF THEM GRAZED ON.

THAT'LL BE WHAT I SMELLED ON THE CORPSE THIS MORNING.

SOMETHING THAT KILLS WITHOUT TOUCH...
...THAT EATS POISONOUS FLOWERS.
AND HAS HORNS...
...ONLY ONE CREATURE FITS THAT DESCRIPTION.
A GORGON.
NEED TO LEAVE. NOW.
NOT READY TO FACE IT. GOTTA PREPARE A POTION BEFORE I GO ON THE HUNT.
YOU SEEM DISTRACTED. WHAT'S TROUBLIN' YOU?
NEVER FACED A GORGON BEFORE. KNOW IT'S BIG, HARD TO KILL. NOT MUCH ELSE.
LEGENDS SAY LOOKING INTO ITS EYES'LL TURN YOU TO STONE. TRUTH IS, JUST GOT A CASE OF BAD BREATH. POISONS ANYONE WHO GETS TOO CLOSE.

PERHAPS THIS'LL 'ELP EASE YOUR TROUBLES. MAKE SOMETHIN' *ELSE* TURN HARD AS STONE...

THIS HOW YOU TREAT EVERY TRAVELER?

ONLY THE *SPECIAL* ONES.

WHAT IS IT YOU NEED TO SHOW ME SO BAD IT CAN'T WAIT TILL MORNIN'?

YOU'LL SEE. I *PROMISE* IT'LL BE WORTH YOUR WHILE.

NEED TO RECONSIDER MY FEE. YOUR INFAMOUS "LORD HEAVY HORN" IS REAL, AND IT'S A GORGON.

WE'LL PAY WHATEVER YOU ASK. I KNEW IT WERE A MONSTER. OL' HEAVY HORN, *huh?*

NEED THESE INGREDIENTS. KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND THEM IN TOWN?

NIERAD CAN SUPPLY THE BLOWBALL FLOWERS AND CELANDINE.

TALK TO STEWPO ABOUT THE DWARVEN SPIRIT. USES IT FOR HIS BRAISES OFTTIMES.

YOUR NAME REALLY "STEWPO"?

ME NATURAL NAME AIN'T STEWPO, NAY, BUT IT SERVES ME AN' ME CUSTOM WELL ENOUGH. MANY OF OUR NAMES 'ERE ARE WHAT WE DO. I MAKE SOUPS AN' STEWS, SO...

WAS TOLD YOU'D HAVE MAHAKAMAN SPIRIT. BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD SPARE SOME.

ALEKSANDER AND I DISCOVERED A ***DWARVEN SANCTUARY*** IN THE CAVE SYSTEM. DEEP ONE. NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.

HAD A LAKE AT ITS CENTER WITH A MONOLITH OF SOME KIND. SURROUNDED BY PILES OF STONES. WALLS COVERED IN ***STRANGE RUNES.*** ANY IDEA WHAT IT IS?

WE DWARVES LIVED IN THESE HILLS ***LONG*** 'FORE YE FOLK CAME ALONG. COULD BE ***THOUSANDS*** OF YEARS OLD.

WELL BEFORE ***MY TIME.***

BUT I WILL TELL YE THIS--

NOT ALL THAT'S LOST IS ***MEANT*** TO BE ***FOUND.***

PURE GOLD, METHINKS.

'ERE, A GIFT-- ONLY ASK FOR *ONE THING* IN RETURN.

OL' FRIEND, I THINK YOU MAY BE RIGHT. COULD BE WHAT WE'S HUNTED FOR ALL THEM YEARS?

TAKE CARE WITH THINGS FROM WAY BACK WHEN, *eh?* FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE 'ERE AN' NOW, IF YE CATCH ME MEANIN'.

WE'S GONNA BE *RICH!*

GO ON AN' HUNT YER MONSTER, WITCHER, BUT *STAY OUTTA THEM CAVES.*

UMMMM

OI! GIVE BACK MY TREASURE, WOODCUTTER. ONLY MEANT TO SHOW IT, NOT SHARE IT.

Just a moment more, ol' friend. I like its hue and gleam. It feels ever so smooth--

I SAID GIVE IT!

NO, IT'S MINE NOW!

?

THEN I'LL KILL YOH, YA STINKIN' LITTLE THIEF!

SHK

SKRCH

SOMEONE STOP 'IM!

BY GODS, BUDZIBOJ! STOP THIS MADNESS! WHAT ARE YOU DOIN'?!

SKRCH

KRAK

GIVE BACK ME TREASURE, YA DIRTY MUTANT!

SMSH

YOSH

FIND ROPE.

BETTER YET-- *CHAINS,* IF YOU HAVE THEM.

HE *KILLED* LEO OVER SOME BLOODY *ROCK?*

BUT *WHY?*

THERE SOMETHIN' *SPECIAL* 'BOUT IT?

HE *DID* CALL IT *TREASURE.*

STOP! GET BACK! NO ONE TOUCH IT!

THAT'S MY GOLD! MINE! DON'T EVEN LOOK AT IT!

I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU ALL!

TO BE CONTINUED...

THE WITCHER®

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"